

Crop Profile for Christmas Trees in North Carolina (Mountains)

Prepared: January 1999

Revised: November 1999; May 2003; June 2008



General Production Information

North Carolina is first in the nation in Fraser fir (*Abies fraseri*) production and second in Christmas tree production behind the Pacific Northwest. In 2006, an estimated 50 million trees were grown on 25,000 acres. Annual cash receipts for Christmas trees are estimated at \$100 million or more with an addition of \$12 million from value-added products such as wreaths, roping and greenery. North Carolina reportedly produces 19 percent of the U.S. production of Christmas trees. Fraser fir is native to the highest elevation mountains in western North Carolina, southwestern Virginia and eastern Tennessee.

Production Regions

Christmas trees are grown in two regions of the state. Western North Carolina produces Fraser fir Christmas trees at elevations usually greater than 3,000 feet. More than 99 percent of Christmas tree production is in western North Carolina. These trees are produced primarily for the wholesale market, though some growers retail their own trees either choose and cut on their own farms, or have tree lots at other locations. Major counties, from most to least production, are Ashe, Avery, Alleghany, Watauga, and Jackson (these five counties produce 88 percent of all trees), plus Mitchell, Yancey, Madison, Transylvania, Buncombe and Macon. All the other North Carolina counties have fewer than 100 acres in production. Trees grown in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain of North Carolina include Virginia pine (*Pinus virginiana*), eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*), eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), and Leyland cypress (*X Cupressocyparis leylandii*). These producers sell trees "choose and cut." The state's two Christmas tree growing regions are very different (producing different species in such different climates).